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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2319
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7603
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6438
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1921
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 7591
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 3628
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2128
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 004336

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2017

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SUBJECT: COURT ORDERS VOTER ROLLS POSTED ON THE ELECTION
COMMISSION'S WEBSITE

REF: ISLAMABAD 2944

Classified By: Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Pakistan's Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry ordered October 4 the country's Election Commission (ECP) to finalize the voter list by October 25 and post it on the ECP's website. The list will be used in the parliamentary elections which are expected in early January 2008.

¶2. (SBU) Political parties, civil society groups and international donors (including the Embassy) have been lobbying for free electronic access to the draft voter list for months. The ECP repeatedly rejected proposals to put the list on the web because this requirement was not codified in the electoral law.

¶3. (C) In response to a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) petition, the Court on July 26 ordered the ECP to add 30 million names to the voter rolls in 30 days by adding names from the 2002 voter list to the draft 2007 list. The ECP now has added 27 million names to the list through this process. Unfortunately, the 2002 list includes a great many duplicates and fraudulent entries, so the final voter list will be far from perfect.

¶4. (C) Comment: This decision by the Court is long overdue. It will enable political parties to better motivate their voters and will contribute to the transparency of the electoral process. A reconciliation package negotiated by the government with the PPP was also announced October 5. It includes provisions to establish a new parliamentary ethics committee, outline an electoral code of conduct for the political parties, and fight fraud by enforcing requirements that electoral results at the polling places be certified by all the political party representatives.

PATTERSON